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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MASS](#) [TU](#)  
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR CALLS ON TURKISH MOD GONUL

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson, E.O. 12958 for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: At the Ambassador's December 23 initial call on Defense Minister Gonul, the two agreed on the importance of the Turkey-US relationship. Gonul reiterated what he has said publicly, that Turkey's Saddam-era agreement with Iraq permitting cross-border operations was no longer valid. The Ambassador encouraged Turkey to contribute more to success in Iraq, an essential element in Ankara's struggle against the PKK terrorists. The Ambassador used Gonul's expression of concern about the damage to the relationship a Congressional resolution on the Armenia Genocide might have to urge GOT movement on freedom of expression, underscoring the damage done by the case against author Orhan Pamuk. The Ambassador raised US corporate concerns about the Turkish defense market, calling for a level playing field. He also informed Gonul that the EXIM Board of Governors had the previous day approved the extension of the facility for the sale of Sea Hawks. Gonul asked that the American Turkish Council write to him with its members' concerns on defense procurement issues. In the context of the visit of the Israeli CHOD, Gonul noted that Israel wanted to brief Turkey on Iran. End Summary.

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US-TU Relations' Continuing Importance  
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¶2. (C) Gonul welcomed the Ambassador warmly to his office on December 23, and waxed about the importance of Turkey's relationship with the United States. Even once Turkey enters the EU, this importance would continue. The friendship between the two countries was not limited to governmental relations, although he lamented that young Turks have forgotten how Turkey and the US fought together in Korea, or how the US and NATO membership helped the Turkish military develop standards. The benefits of this collaboration was evident in Bosnia, as Turkey was one of the few European allies to be able to respond militarily to the crisis there. Similarly, Turkey enjoys good relations with both Israel and the Palestinian Authority and can thereby contribute uniquely to Middle East peace.

¶3. (C) Recalling the Secretary's characterization of the relationship as "a strategic partnership of extreme

importance," the Ambassador emphasized that the US also highly values its relationship with Turkey. He also agreed that not everyone in the US, like in Turkey, appreciates how the Turkey-US partnership has contributed to regional peace and freedom. In working to strengthen and modernize the relationship, he anticipated the two countries would develop new ways to talk about their relationship that produced practical results so young Turks and others would come to appreciate the relationship as well.

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Iraq and the PKK  
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14. (C) The Ambassador acknowledged Turkey's contribution to building a unified, free Iraq, including the meeting Foreign Minister Gul organized in Istanbul with prominent Iraqi Sunnis and Ambassador Khalilzad. He noted that as Iraq moves past the elections, the US would want to work with Turkey and others to help stand up the new government in Baghdad. Particularly, he called on Turkey to play an active role in encouraging groups to come together to form a broad, effective government. He urged the GOT to consider expanding its training of Iraqis.

15. (C) A stable, capable Iraq is one essential strategy in dealing with the terrorist PKK issue, the Ambassador continued. Our approach is to attack the PKK's sources of finance in Europe, to assist Turkey with the fight in Turkey with enhanced intelligence exchange, and to get Iraq right. Although a quick strike or dropping a few bombs might provide instant gratification, a longer-term approach promised a more durable solution to the problem.

16. (C) Gonul agreed that success in Iraq was at least as important to Turkey as it was to the US. He praised the achievements of the coalition. He expressed frustration with the Turkish parliamentary opposition that, in the current budget debate, has attacked the Defense Minister for the lack of success over the PKK. "Why aren't we in Iraq," they ask. Gonul said he wants to tell them that Turkey isn't there because of the way the opposition voted on March 1, 2003 (preventing our troops from entering Iraq from the north), but cannot due to parliamentary decorum. He also was exasperated by the opposition's refusal to recognize that there is now a sovereign Iraqi government which means the US can no longer do whatever it likes. Similarly, the Saddam-era agreement permitting Turkish cross-border operations was no longer valid and would need to be renewed with the new government.

17. (C) Gonul thought that the opposition party's efforts to hammer the government on the PKK might "cast a shadow" over bilateral relations, noting that a similar phenomenon occurred with France. Once, France was Turks' favorite country; then the French parliament passed a bill formally recognizing the Armenian Genocide, and now it is hard to find a Turk with a positive view of France. He did not want the PKK issue to have the same effect on Turkish views of the US, he warned. He recognized the need for patience, for an integral Iraq, and a strong government in Baghdad with a capable military.

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Genocide, Congress and Freedom of Speech  
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18. (C) Gonul recited a history of the Armenian issue, arguing that the events of 1915 did not constitute genocide and highlighting Armenia's territorial claims on Turkey. He cited two resolutions on genocide, HR 316 and SR 195, were submitted to committee on Sept. 15 in the House and Nov. 18 in the Senate. The Ambassador would need to deal with this issue during his tenure, observed the Minister.

19. (C) The Ambassador reminded Gonul that the President opposed these resolutions. But unlike in previous years, the debate now has some long-time supporters of Turkey criticizing Ankara. Part of the reason was the March 1, 2003

vote, but part of the reason was that high profile events, such as trying internationally renowned author Orhan Pamuk for stating how many Armenians and Kurds were killed, made it harder for Turkey's friends to help. The American Jewish community, for example, was less inclined to come to Turkey's defense now. Turkey needed to work harder to address its friends' concerns as well as find ways to publicly demonstrate the benefits the US-Turkey partnership produces for both Americans and Turks. If these resolutions were to come to a vote today, the Ambassador warned, they would pass.

To head them off Turkey should work more effectively on the Hill and address the problems it faces in the US, especially on freedom of expression and other issues of interest in Congress. Gonul protested that the judiciary was independent and should not have referred the Pamuk case to the Justice Ministry (see reftel). The Ambassador reiterated that this case undercuts the President's and others ability to help Turkey.

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Defense Industrial Woes  
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¶10. (C) The Ambassador recalled Gonul's recent trip to Washington and his meeting with the American Turkish Council where a number of complaints with Turkey's procurement system were voiced. The Undersecretariat for Defense Industry (SSM--Turkey's main defense procurement agency) was demanding impossible and/or unreasonable terms and conditions. This was why no US company bid on Turkey's attack helicopter program and why Sikorsky was struggling with whether it will be able to bid on Turkey's utility helicopter tender. The latter case would impact Sikosky's decision on where to locate its international Black Hawk production facility. SSM's practice appeared inconsistent with the Prime Minister's desire to attract more foreign investment and expand trade. He urged Gonul to take these concerns seriously or risk seeing more American defense contractors leave Turkey or refuse to compete for tenders. Gonul suggested that he was surprised by the ATC presentation. He wanted ATC to lay out its major concerns in writing and in plain language so he could work on them with relevant authorities. (MND Policy Chief RADM Serdar Dulger subsequently informed us that ATC Director Holmes had told Gonul that he would send a letter.)

¶11. (C) Gonul asked what the Ambassador saw as American companies major problems. Pre-contract licensing and unreasonable liability requirements were items companies mentioned to the Ambassador. ODC Turkey Chief MajGen Sutton added that there appears to be a problem transmitting senior officials' decisions and intent to the working level were negotiations occur. The Ambassador undertook to encourage ATC to transmit its views in writing.

¶12. (U) The Ambassador informed Gonul that the EXIM Bank Board had extended the facility for Turkey's purchase of Sikorsky Sea Hawk helicopters on December 22. Gonul expressed appreciation.

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Israel Ties  
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¶13. (C) Recalling his remark about Turkey enjoying good relations with both Palestinians and Israelis, Gonul noted this did not apply to his ministry. Turkey has "almost no" defense relationship with the Palestinian Authority, but enjoy very close security relations with Israel. He praised Israel's work upgrading Turkey's M-60 tanks and F-4 fighters.

He also noted in the context of the Dec. 22 visit to Ankara of the Israeli chief of defense that Israel wanted to brief Turkey on Iran.

WILSON